# *Unitarian Horizons*

February 15, 1938

## TRY UTAH

WHEN I reached Salt Lake City on a recent trip, I was handed a letter which had been addressed to me at "Salt Lake City, California." A humorous and ingenious postal clerk had drawn a line through the word "California" and added the note, "Try Utah."

It was good advice — not only for the delivery of that particular letter, but in general. It is exceedingly good advice for anyone who has a mind

to discover what Unitarians are actually doing today in this country of ours. This isn't the place to describe in detail the vigor and enthusiasm of the Unitarian Church in Salt Lake City; but if anyone still cherishes the spirit of downhearted uncertainty as to the future of Unitarianism, let him stop off on his way to or from the Pacific Coast and "try Utah." He will certainly find there courage and hope and a conviction of great purpose in a vital organization.

## MAINE TO CALIFORNIA

THE same experience awaits the traveler in a great many places. I could name at least a dozen Unitarian churches, from Maine to California, which I happen to have visited personally in the last few months, where the flame of Unitarian hope and courage is burning with high and steady power. These churches are exciting places to visit, full of the spirit of eager adventure, vital in themselves and life-giving to their neighbors. Some of them are "big" in the numerical sense; some of them are "small"; but all of them are great churches, in the more important sense of the word. Taken together, they are a mighty influence, filled with promise of far greater service to the world than our fellowship has yet rendered.

Some of them are "old" churches, with long histories running back into the early periods of

American life; some of them are "new," with only a few years of existence behind them; and almost all have their history ahead of them. This also is a distinction that doesn't matter, for the churches I am thinking of are all alike "new" in their spirit. They are young churches, with youth's "arrowy thrill" in their veins and the sense of a great expectancy in their hearts.

Nor has geography very much to do with it. If you use the term "western" as meaning young and vigorous and full of high spirit, there is a chain of "western" Unitarian churches from the Atlantic to the Pacific — from Sanford, Maine, to Stockton, California. Or you can turn the vocabulary around and say that the spirit which led to the founding of the Old Colony has been carried straight through to the shores of San Francisco Bay.

## WIDE AS THE CONTINENT

THE point is, of course, that our Unitarian faith cannot be kept within any narrow parochial or sectional limits. It is at least continental in its sweep; and the moment one says that, it becomes plain that no one continent is big enough for it. The only term is "planetary." And until one gets this sense of the wide horizons, Unitarianism is not really *grasped* and understood. Even in the tiniest hamlet, where only one

individual Unitarian finds himself living in apparent exile from his brethren in the faith, there is a spirit that circles the globe.

But this spirit must be nurtured if it is to survive and grow. There is a tendency in our ordinary human nature that leads in the direction of isolation. A religion that cherishes the values of individualism can easily drift in the direction of *mere* individualism. Local independence may become parochialism. Self-reliance may degenerate into a false self-sufficiency. The insidious attacks of loneliness may destroy the realities of fellowship — even the fellowship of the spirit. A faith that is planetary in its true scope may find itself shut in by the prison walls of a single room.

## BRIDGES TO THE OUTER WORLD

THERE is need, therefore, for constant effort to counteract the ingrowing tendency of our Unitarian faith; and every possible means to this end should be employed with as much skill and devotion as we can command. Prince Max of Baden, speaking to the teachers in a new school which he had founded shortly after the war, urged them to "build bridges to the outer world"; and that phrase is a good motto for Unitarians today.

The first bridge is travel, and we are committed to a policy — so far as our executive officers are

concerned — that will ensure the maximum possible amount of actual visitation of our scattered churches. But more important than official visits is the frequent visiting back and forth among the ministers and laity of the churches in local and regional areas. The plain fact is that most of us are not acquainted with our Unitarian neighbors, and this is the first thing to change.

Then the local, regional, and national conferences are of tremendous value in this respect. We need to build up again the habit of going — and going in large numbers — to all such gatherings, if for no other purpose than to get to know each other. Some of us will be amazed to discover how very friendly and human our fellow Unitarians are!

I hope we are going to San Francisco for our General Conference in 1939, and I hope that we may make that great pilgrimage the climax of two years of greatly increased traveling back and forth among Unitarian churches in all parts of the country. When we meet in San Francisco, let us meet as old friends!

## THE PRINTED WORD

NEXT to actual travel, the best way to get acquainted with our fellow Unitarians is by means of the printed word. It has been the policy of Unitarians for more than a hundred years to rely upon the printed word as the

principal method for extending the knowledge of our faith, but we have neglected to make full use of this means of widening and deepening our knowledge of one another.

There is at present only one official medium for the exchange of ideas and information among Unitarians, with a denominational scope. That is *The Christian Register*. And the astonishing and distressing fact is that at this moment the total number of subscribers to that weekly periodical is only 3348.

At Niagara Falls, the assembled delegates pledged themselves to make every effort to double the number of subscribers before the annual meeting in May; and an active campaign to that end is now under way. The price of an annual subscription has been reduced to two dollars and a half. Surely it is not unreasonable to expect that this first effort to increase the circulation of our weekly paper will be successful!

## SOURCES OF COURAGE

IN the pages of *The Christian Register* from week to week, you will find the material out of which you can build up a picture of what Unitarians are doing and thinking and dreaming, all over the land. To see the actual facts, to get acquainted with what is going on, to catch the new spirit of confidence in our high cause and

destiny, to feel that one is a part of the great and growing movement of our free faith — here is the secret of fresh courage for Unitarians everywhere. It is also one of the absolutely essential requirements for the creation of the sense of unity and fellowship without which Unitarians cannot make any effective contribution to the needs of the modern world.

## NOT MERELY DUTY

A GOOD case could be made, I think, for the appeal to Unitarians to subscribe to *The Christian Register* as a matter of sheer loyalty; but there is a much more persuasive argument than that. Once you begin to discover what is happening to your fellow Unitarians in other parts of the country, you will find the news section of "The Register" really thrilling. The recent Southwestern Conference number, for example, was full of exciting news and ideas. With even the least touch of imagination, it was easy to begin dreaming about the future of our cause in that great section; and dreams open the way for plans, and plans open the way for achievement. I hope there may be a succession of such issues — one for California, one for Maine, one for Florida, one for Minnesota, and so on indefinitely, at frequent intervals.

I began by suggesting that we should "Try Utah," in order to get a real idea of what Uni-

tarianism today is beginning to mean. Through the pages of *The Christian Register* we can "try" one state after another, until we glimpse the continental significance of the Church to which we belong. Then our enthusiasm and confidence will be limited only by our willingness to "spend and be spent" in a great cause.

F. M. E.

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Volume I UNITARIAN HORIZONS Number 6

Published by The Beacon Press, Inc. on the fifteenth day of each month from September to June inclusive.

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*Printed in the U. S. A.*